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March 8, 2016

Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Talent is a top priority of the West Michigan Policy Forum (WMPF) and we strongly believe action should be taken on 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading legislation at your earliest possible opportunity.

House Bill 4822 is a critical step to improving Michigan's education system by addressing a troubling literacy problem and put us on the path to become a leading economy.

From kindergarten through 3rd grade, students learn to read. Beginning in 4th grade students need to be able to read to learn and comprehend. Unfortunately, over one third of Michigan fourth graders are not proficient readers. Data has shown that students not reading at grade level by the end of third grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school.

House Bill 4822 is a comprehensive approach to improve proficiency, by requiring annual screening and targeted interventions for students with a reading delay. It establishes a support system for educators to work with coaches and receive professional development, and requires student retention if absolutely necessary.

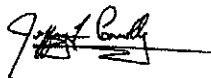
This legislation is based on research and best practices. Michigan would join 35 other states who use this type of approach that has resulted in a 50 percent reduction in 3rd grade illiteracy within 5 years in programs.

We ask for your support in passage of House Bill 4822 to help our children learn to read by the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, so they can read to learn for the rest of their lives.

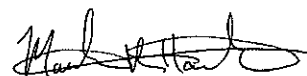
Sincerely,



Jim Dunlap  
Chairman, WMPF



Jeff Connolly  
Treasurer, WMPF



Matthew R. Haworth  
Vice Chair, WMPF



Rick Baker  
Secretary, WMPF

Cc: Doug DeVos, Immediate Past Chair and WMPF Executive Committee